

the State agency must resume action on the changes as required in paragraph (c)(3) of this section.

(B) If the situation does not require a PA notice of adverse action, the State agency must issue a RFC and take action in accordance with paragraph (c)(3) of this section.

(iii) Depending on the household's response to the RFC, the State agency must take appropriate action, if necessary, to close the household's case or adjust the household's benefit amount.

(4) *Transitional Benefits Alternative.* The State agency may elect to provide households leaving TANF with transitional food stamp benefits as provided in this paragraph (f)(4). A State agency electing the Transitional Benefits Alternative (TBA) must provide transitional benefits, at a minimum, to all families with earnings who leave TANF. The State agency may not provide transitional benefits to a household which is leaving TANF when: the State agency has determined that the household is noncompliant with TANF requirements and the State agency is imposing a comparable food stamp sanction in accordance with § 273.11; the State agency has determined that the household has violated a food stamp work requirement in accordance with § 273.7; the State agency has determined that a household member has committed an intentional Program violation in accordance with § 273.16, or the State agency is closing the household's TANF case in response to information indicating the household failed to comply with food stamp reporting requirements. The State agency must use procedures at paragraph (f)(3) of this section to determine the continued eligibility and benefit level of households denied transitional benefits under this paragraph (f)(4).

(i) When a household leaves TANF, the State agency may freeze for up to 3 months the household's benefit amount at the level the household received when it was receiving TANF. This is the household's transition period. If the household is losing income as a result of leaving TANF, the State agency must adjust the food stamp benefit amount before initiating the transition period. To provide the transition period, the State agency may ex-

tend the certification period for up to 3 months, not to exceed the maximum periods specified in § 273.10(f)(1) and (f)(2).

(ii) The State agency must issue a transition notice (TN) advising the household of the following: that the State agency must reevaluate its food stamp case no more than 3 months from the effective date of the TANF case closing; that its benefit amount will remain the same as when it was receiving cash assistance (or that the State agency has adjusted the food stamp benefit amount if the household's income is decreasing as the result of leaving cash assistance); that it is not required to report and provide verification for any changes in household circumstances until the deadline established in accordance with paragraph (c)(3) of this section (or its recertification interview, if the certification period is expiring); and that it may report changes if income decreases or expenses or household size increase.

(iii) If the household does report changes in its circumstances during the transition period, the State agency must adjust the household's benefit amount in accordance with paragraph (c) of this section, *except that*, if the reported change would cause a reduction in the household's benefit amount, the State agency must make the change effective the month following the last month of the transition period.

(iv) Before the end of the transition period, the State agency must issue the RFC specified in paragraph (c)(3) of this section and act on any information it has about the household's new circumstances in accordance with paragraph (c)(3) of this section, or recertify the household in accordance with § 273.14. At the end of the transition period, the State agency may extend the household's certification period in accordance with § 273.10(f)(5).

[Amdt. 132, 43 FR 47889, Oct. 17, 1978]

EDITORIAL NOTE: For FEDERAL REGISTER citations affecting § 273.12, see the List of CFR Sections Affected, which appears in the Finding Aids section of the printed volume and on GPO Access.

§ 273.13 Notice of adverse action.

(a) *Use of notice.* Prior to any action to reduce or terminate a household's

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benefits within the certification period, the State agency shall, except as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, provide the household timely and adequate advance notice before the adverse action is taken.

(1) The notice of adverse action shall be considered timely if the advance notice period conforms to that period of time defined by the State agency as an adequate notice period for its public assistance caseload, provided that the period includes at least 10 days from the date the notice is mailed to the date upon which the action becomes effective. Also, if the adverse notice period ends on a weekend or holiday, and a request for a fair hearing and continuation of benefits is received the day after the weekend or holiday, the State agency shall consider the request timely received.

(2) The notice of adverse action shall be considered adequate if it explains in easily understandable language: The proposed action; the reason for the proposed action; the household's right to request a fair hearing; the telephone number of the food stamp office (toll-free number or a number where collect calls will be accepted for households outside the local calling area) and, if possible, the name of the person to contact for additional information; the availability of continued benefits; and the liability of the household for any overissuances received while awaiting a fair hearing if the hearing official's decision is adverse to the household. If there is an individual or organization available that provides free legal representation, the notice shall also advise the household of the availability of the service.

(3) The State agency may notify a household that its benefits will be reduced or terminated, no later than the date the household receives, or would have received, its allotment, if the following conditions are met:

(i) The household reports the information which results in the reduction or termination.

(ii) The reported information is in writing and signed by the household.

(iii) The State agency can determine the household's allotment or ineligibility based solely on the information

provided by the household as required in paragraph (a)(3)(ii) of this section.

(iv) The household retains its right to a fair hearing as allowed in § 273.15.

(v) The household retains its right to continued benefits if the fair hearing is requested within the time period set by the State agency in accordance with § 273.13(a)(1).

(vi) The State agency continues the household's previous benefit level, if required, within five working days of the household's request for a fair hearing.

(4) The State agency shall notify a household that its benefits will be reduced if an EBT system-error has occurred during the redemption process resulting in an out-of-balance settlement condition. This notification shall be made no later than the date the action is initiated against the household account. The State agency shall adjust the benefit in accordance with § 274.12 of this chapter.

(b) *Exemptions from notice.* Individual notices of adverse action shall not be provided when:

(1) The State initiates a mass change as described in § 273.12(e).

(2) The State agency determines, based on reliable information, that all members of a household have died.

(3) The State agency determines, based on reliable information, that the household has moved from the project area.

(4) The household has been receiving an increased allotment to restore lost benefits, the restoration is complete, and the household was previously notified in writing of when the increased allotment would terminate.

(5) The household's allotment varies from month to month within the certification period to take into account changes which were anticipated at the time of certification, and the household was so notified at the time of certification.

(6) The household jointly applied for PA/GA and food stamp benefits and has been receiving food stamp benefits pending the approval of the PA/GA grant and was notified at the time of certification that food stamp benefits would be reduced upon approval of the PA/GA grant.

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(7) A household member is disqualified for intentional Program violation, in accordance with § 273.16, or the benefits of the remaining household members are reduced or terminated to reflect the disqualification of that household member. The notice requirements for individuals or households affected by intentional Program violation disqualifications are explained in § 273.16.

(8) The State agency has elected to assign a longer certification period to a household certified on an expedited basis and for whom verification was postponed, provided the household has received written notice that the receipt of benefits beyond the month of application is contingent on its providing the verification which was initially postponed and that the State agency may act on the verified information without further notice as provided in § 273.2(i)(4).

(9) The State agency must change the household's benefits back to the original benefit level as required in § 273.12(c)(1)(iii).

(10) Converting a household from cash and/or food stamp coupon repayment to benefit reduction as a result of failure to make agreed upon repayment as discussed in § 273.18.

(11) The State agency is terminating the eligibility of a resident of a drug or alcoholic treatment center or a group living arrangement if the facility loses either its certification from the appropriate agency or agencies of the State (as defined in § 271.2) or has its status as an authorized representative suspended due to FNS disqualifying it as a retailer. However, residents of group living arrangements applying on their own behalf are still eligible to participate.

(12) The household voluntarily requests, in writing or in the presence of a caseworker, that its participation be terminated. If the household does not provide a written request, the State agency shall send the household a letter confirming the voluntary withdrawal. Written confirmation does not entail the same rights as a notice of adverse action except that the household may request a fair hearing.

(13) The State agency determines, based on reliable information, that the household will not be residing in the

project area and, therefore, will be unable to obtain its next allotment. The State agency shall inform the household of its termination no later than its next scheduled issuance date. While the State agency may inform the household before its next issuance date, the State agency shall not delay terminating the household's participation in order to provide advance notice.

(14) The State agency initiates recoupment of a claim as specified in § 273.18(g)(4) against a household which has previously received a notice of adverse action with respect to such claim.

(c) *Optional notice.* The State agency may, at its option, send the household an adequate notice as provided in paragraph (b)(3) of this section when the household's address is unknown and mail directed to it has been returned by the post office indicating no known forwarding address.

[Amdt. 132, 43 FR 47889, Oct. 17, 1978]

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§ 273.14 Recertification.

(a) *General.* No household may participate beyond the expiration of the certification period assigned in accordance with § 273.10(f) without a determination of eligibility for a new period. The State agency must establish procedures for notifying households of expiration dates, providing application forms, scheduling interviews, and recertifying eligible households prior to the expiration of certification periods. Households must apply for recertification and comply with interview and verification requirements.

(b) *Recertification process—(1) Notice of expiration.* (i) The State agency shall provide households certified for one month or certified in the second month of a two-month certification period a notice of expiration (NOE) at the time of certification. The State agency shall provide other households the NOE before the first day of the last month of the certification period, but not before the first day of the next-to-the-last month. Jointly processed PA and GA households need not receive a separate